

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-15 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-13 TRSE-00 MBFR-04

SAJ-01 OC-06 CCO-00 SY-10 DRC-01 /163 W

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P R 211205Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7811

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USDOCOSOUTH

USEUCOM

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NICOSIA 1994

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CY, TU

SUBJECT: PLANNED GOVT OF CYPRUS DEMARCHE DURING TURKISH TROOP
ROTATION

SUMMARY: GOVT INFORMS US IT WILL SUBJECT SEALED TURKISH POUCHES TO
MAGNETOMETER INSPECTION DURING ROTATION OF TURKISH CONTINGENT NEXT
TUESDAY, DEMAND THEY BE OPENED OR RETURNED TO TURKEY IF SUBSTANTIAL
PRESENCE METAL. TURKISH AMBASSADOR DOES NOT INTEND TO COMPLY. GOVT
PROBABLY DOES NOT PLAN TO FORCE ISSUE TO SUSTAINED CONFRONTATION, BUT
IS PLAYING A TRICKY GAME. CHARGE ASKED WHY THEY THOUGHT THIS A GOOD
TIME TO CREATE CRISIS; PARTIAL ANSWER SUGGESTED GOVT ACTING FROM
ANNOYANCE, HOPES TO FORCE TURKS TO REDUCE ILLICIT USE OF POUCH.
REQUEST AUTHORITY TO REPEAT DOUBTS AS TO WISDOM CYPRUS ACTION.
END SUMMARY

1. ACTING FOREIGN MINISTRY DIR GEN PELAGHIAS CALLED IN
CHARGE SEPT 20 TO NOTIFY HIM THAT COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
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SEPT 13 HAD MADE DECISION TO INSPECT SO-CALLED "DIPLOMATIC

POUCHES" WHICH INCOMING TURKISH CONTINGENT NORMALLY BRINGS WITH IT ON ROTATION (SCHEDULED SEPT 25). INSPECTION WOULD BE BY MAGNETOMETER (PROBABLY OPERATED BY CIVILIAN CYPRUS AIRWAYS EMPLOYEE). IF SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES OF METALS DETECTED, GOVT OF CYPRUS INTENDS TO OFFER INCOMING TURKISH CONTINGENT THE ALTERNATIVES OF CARRYING THE BAGS BACK TO TURKEY OR HAVING THEM INSPECTED.

2. PELAGHIAS ADMITTED THAT GOVT OF CYPRUS HAS REGULARLY AND UNSUCCESSFULLY TRIED TO ASSERT RIGHT OF INSPECTION, BUT SAID THIS IS FIRST TIME COUNCIL OF MINISTERS HAS FORMALLY DECIDED TO PRESS ISSUE. DURING EXCHANGE, PELAGHIAS ALSO AGREED THAT UNDER 1960 PROTOCOL, TURKISH CONTINGENT HAS AUTHORITY TO IMPORT "DOCUMENTS" UNDER SPECIFIED CONDITIONS, WITHOUT INSPECTION. HE POINTED OUT THAT BAGS IN MANY INSTANCES HAVE TOTALLED SEVERAL HUNDRED POUNDS, PROBABLY CONTAINED SENSITIVE ITEMS SUCH AS FIRING MECHANISMS FOR LOCALLY MANUFACTURED PISTOLS, AND SAID IT IS A TRAVESTY TO ALLOW SUCH IMPORTS CONTINUE UNDER RUBRIC OF "DOCUMENTS."

3. PELAGHIAS SAID FOREIGN MINISTER HAD INSTRUCTED HIM TO NOTIFY UNFICYP, GREEK, U.S. AND U.K. AMBASSADORS OF PROJECTED ACTION. (NOT TURKISH.)

4. DURING SUBSEQUENT EXCHANGE OF REMARKS, CHARGE OFFERED FOLLOWING THOUGHTS AS STRICTLY OFF-THE-CUFF PERSONAL REACTIONS:

(A) FOR THE RECORD, WE SHOULD PERHAPS MAKE CLEAR THAT WE OURSELVES DO NOT NECESSARILY SUBSCRIBE TO VIEW THAT ALL DIPLOMATIC MAIL MUST BE NON-METALLIC. FOR INSTANCE, WE MAY MOVE SENSITIVE PARTS FOR CODING MACHINES THROUGH POUCH. PELAGHIAS, AS EXPECTED, SAID NO QUESTION OF EFFORT TO LIMIT OR CONTROL OTHER NATIONS' USE OF DIPLOMATIC POUCH.

(B) CHARGE ASSUMED TURKS WOULD REACT VERY STRONGLY, AND THAT DEADLOCK COULD DEVELOP, WITH TURKS APPLYING RAPIDLY RISING PRESSURES. HE WONDERED WHETHER PELAGHIAS COULD TELL US WHY GOVT OF CYPRUS HAD DECIDED THAT THIS WAS AN APPROPRIATE TIME TO SET IN MOTION WHAT COULD BE SHARPEST CONFRONTATION WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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ANKARA IN RECENT YEARS. PELAGHIAS SAID HE NOT PRESENT AT COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING, NOT CERTAIN WHAT REASONS ADVANCED. HE FELT THAT GOVT WAS INCREASINGLY ANNOYED AT FLAGRANT TURKISH MISUSE OF POUCH, AND THAT RECENT TURKISH STUBBORNESS (UNSPECIFIED) HAD PERHAPS BEEN THE TRIGGER.

(C) CHARGE SAID HE ASSUMED DECISION WAS CLEAR EVIDENCE

THAT AS OF LAST THURSDAY GOVT OF CYPRUS HAD WRITTEN OFF ANY PROSPECT FOR MEANINGFUL ADVANCE IN INTERCOMMUNAL TALKS FOR INDEFINITE FUTURE, SINCE CONFRONTATION OVER CONTINGENT POUCHES LIKELY TO ELIMINATE CHANCES OF SUCH PROGRESS IF THEY HAD EXISTED. PELAGHIAS SAID THEY WERE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT TALKS, BUT DID NOT CLAIM TO KNOW WHETHER THIS ESTIMATE HAD FIGURED IN THE DECISION.

(D) CHARGE REMARKED HE THOUGH GOVT OF CYPRUS MAY BE SETTING OUT TO GRAB THE BEAR BY THE TAIL, AND HE WONDERED WHAT CONTINGENCY PLANNING HAD BEEN DONE IN EVENT ANKARA PROVED VERY TOUGH. HE HOPED THAT THE GOVT OF CYPRUS DID NOT PLAN SPECIAL POLICE OR OTHER DISPOSITIONS WHICH WOULD ENHANCE CONFRONTATION ATMOSPHERE ON SEPT 25. PELAGHIAS SAID NO SUCH DISPOSITIONS WERE PLANNED, AND THAT NO DECISIONS WOULD BE MADE WITHOUT REFERRAL BACK TO NICOSIA. HE DID NOT THINK SUCH "SMALL ISSUE" WOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO CAUSE VIOLENT TURKISH REACTION BUT AGREED RUEFULLY WHEN CHARGE CITED WARS WHICH HAVE STARTED ON DISPROPORTIONATELY SMALL GROUNDS.

5. CHARGE MADE CLEAR THAT HE WAS NOT SPEAKING WITH ANY INSTRUCTION, APPRECIATED BEING INFORMED, AND EMPHASIZED THAT U.S. GOVT HAS NO STANDING IN THIS MATTER OTHER THAN AS INTERESTED FRIEND. PELAGHIAS URGED CHARGE TO BE IN FURTHER TOUCH IF WE HAD FURTHER COMMENT EITHER LOCALLY OR FROM WASHINGTON.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NICOSIA 1994

6. PELAGHIAS PRESENTATION AT FIRST WAS APOCALYPTIC. AS CONVERSATION PROGRESSED, HOWEVER, HE BEGAN TO MAKE MUCH GENTLER NOISES, SAID INTENT WAS REALLY SIMPLY TO UNDERLINE IMPORTANCE WHICH NICOSIA ATTACHES TO THIS "VIOLATION" OF AGREEMENTS, AND TO PERSUADE TURKS TO CUT DOWN USE OF THIS "ILLCIT" CHANNEL. HE SAID HE CERTAINLY DID NOT PLAN TO FORCE ISSUE TO TOTAL CONFRONTATION, AND SEPARATELY HE REMARKED THAT SOMETHING WOULD HAVE BEEN GAINED IF ONLY GOVT OF CYPRUS STAND CAUSED TURKS IN FUTURE TO FOLLOW PROCEDURE ESTABLISHED IN 1960 CONVENTION OF ITEMIZING TYPES OF DOCUMENTS CONTAINED AND EQUIPPING COURIER WITH PROPER IDENTIFICATION. PELAGHIAS SAID GOVT OF CYPRUS WAS PERMISSIVE THIS TIME IN CLEARING OTHER PROPOSED MATERIEL IMPORTS DURING CONTINGENT ROTATION (THERE IS AN ESTABLISHED PROCEDURE FOR SUCH CLEARANCE). HE SAID ALSO THAT PROPOSAL TO EXAMINE POUCHES WITH METAL DETECTOR DID NOT EXTEND TO ANY PROPOSAL TO EXAMINE SOLDIERS' PERSONAL KIT.

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7. UNFICYP (PREM CHAND) CONFIRMS UNFICYP WAS INFORMED. IT HAS RELUCTANTLY BECOME INVOLVED AND HAS NOTIFIED TURKS, ALTHOUGH OSORIO-TAFALL STRONGLY URGED GOVT TO DEFER ACTION, GO DIRECTLY TO TURKS. (HE EVEN THREATENED TO ASK UNSYG AUTHORITY TO REFUSE UNFICYP GOOD OFFICES.) ROTATION OF TURKISH CONTINGENT IS CONTROLLED BY 1960 AGREEMENT BETWEEN CYPRUS, GREECE AND TURKEY. UNFICYP HAS NO FORMAL STANDING, ALTHOUGH IT HAS HELPED IN PAST TO ADMINISTER ROTATION AND IRON OUT MISUNDERSTANDINGS. PREM CHAND HAS NO DESIRE TO GET IN MIDDLE IF THIS CYPRIOT INITIATIVE SHOULD RESULT IN VIOLENCE. (HE NOTES THAT, TACTICALLY, CYPRIOTS COULD HARDLY HAVE SELECTED A WORSE LOCATION TO START A CRISIS THAN FAMAGUSTA HARBOR.) PREM CHAND BELIEVES LEGAL ISSUE IS MOOT AS TO WHETHER TURKS HAVE RIGHT TO BRING IN POUCHES WITHOUT INSPECTION UNDER PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS, AND HE AND UNSYG REP OSORIO-TAFALL ARE UNSYMPATHETIC TO GOVT OF CYPRUS IN THIS INCIDENT, BUT TELL US THEY WILL GO AHEAD AS SCHEDULED, MEDIATE WHEN CONFRONTATION OCCURS.

8. BRITISH INFORMED BUT PLAN NO ACTION.

9. TURKISH AMBASSADOR HAS DEFERRED DEPARTURE FOR NEW YOURK

UNTIL AFTER TROOP ROTATION. TELLS UNFICYP TURKS WILL NOT ACCEPT INSPECTION, BUT AVOIDS COMMITMENT AS TO WHAT TURKEY WOULD DO IF DEADLOCK REACHED.

10. COMMENT: THIS SEEMS TO BE EXAMPLE OF LOCAL TALENT FOR CREATING CRISIS FULL-BLOWN FROM STANDING START. SEPT 25 COULD BE A LIVELY DAY, BUT WE DOUBT GOVT OF CYPRUS EXPECTS TO DO MORE THAN DELAY ROTATION SOME HOURS WHILE IT ARGUES FOR POUCH INSPECTION--AS IT HAS IN PAST. GOVT MAY THINK THAT BY HUFFING AND PUFFING IT WILL PERSUADE TURKS TO REDUCE FUTURE POUCH SHIPMENTS. SEPARATELY, GOVT OFFICIALS CLAIM THAT TURKISH HELICOPTER FLIGHTS DIMINISHED AFTER GOVT OF CYPRUS THREATENED TO SHOOT DOWN ON SIGHT ALL UNIDENTIFIED HELICOPTERS (A THREAT WHICH IT PROBABLY WOULD NOT AND COULD NOT CARRY OUT). GOVT MAY FEEL IT HAS STUMBLER UPON A USEFUL WAY OF LIMITING IMPORTED MATERIEL.

11. WE ARE INTRIGUED BY FOREIGN MINISTER'S DECISION TO NOTIFY CERTAIN FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS. HE MAY HAVE INTENDED TO CONFIDENTIAL

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SOLICIT REACTION FROM US IN ORDER TO HAVE FURTHER AMMUNITION IN DEBATE WITH MORE BLOODY-MINDED COLLEAGUES, OR NOTIFICATION MAY SIMPLY HAVE BEEN INTENDED TO ELICIT IF POSSIBLE USG INTERCESSION WITH ANKARA TO AVOID CRISIS.

12. ACTION REQUESTED: REQUEST AUTHORITY TO MAKE POINT IN PARA 4(A) ABOVE UNDER INSTRUCTIONS TO GOVT OF CYPRUS, TO EXPRESS AGAIN USG CURIOSITY AS TO WHY GOVT OF CYPRUS UNDERTOOK TO FORCE ISSUE AT THIS TIME, AND TO ASK WHY IT CHOSE TO RAISE MATTER IN THIS FASHION RATHER THAN WORKING OUT AGREEMENT IN DISCUSSION WITH GREECE AND TURKEY AS PROVIDED IN 1960 AGREEMENT ON CONTINGENTS. (PRESENTATION WOULD MAKE CLEAR USG DID NOT BELIEVE ITSELF INVOLVED.) WE BELIEVE THAT BY TAKING THIS LINE WE WILL DEMONSTRATE THAT CYPRUS IS UNLIKELY TO HAVE VERY SYMPATHETIC FOREIGN AUDIENCE IF IT GETS INTO TROUBLE ON THIS ISSUE. FOR THE RECORD, WE WILL HAVE DEPRIVED GOVT OF ANY CLAIM (IF IT LATER SOLICITS OUR ASSISTANCE IN TROUBLE) THAT IT NOTIFIED US OF PLANS AND WE DID NOT OBJECT. SUCH APPROACH WOULD SUPPORT UNFICYP EFFORTS. THEY ENCOURAGED US TO TAKE LINE ABOVE.
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